social condition, using richly illustrative examples from other primate (and some nonprimate) species.

Each of the nine chapters deals in depth with one aspect of human relationships, including dominance, nepotism, rank and status, cooperation, love, and social bonds. Each topic is discussed from an evolutionary perspective and uses animal models, candid observations, and oftentimes historical and cultural anecdotes. The narrative is rooted in the appropriate scientific literature, but accessibly so, making the overall effect a highly readable popular-science book. Indeed, Maestripieri manages to weave together solid scientific references with whimsical anecdotes in writing that is engaging, warm, often humorous—and therefore memorable. I found his discussion of the Italian system of *raccomandazione* ("recommendation") especially interesting, which added a unique cultural dimension to a book that could very easily be considered one for only those of us who study nonhuman primates. Anthropologists, psychologists, and others are likely already familiar with Maestripieri's research, but this is an overview that will interest workers in many other fields too, given its primary focus on the human condition.

Games Primates Play is a book geared ostensibly toward a nonprofessional, educated, and interested audience. Maestripieri's true skill lies in communicating the science simply but effectively, while never condescending to the reader. The author produces effortless reading in a wonderful overview that I would recommend to interested students and colleagues. The topics are accessible and lend themselves perfectly to class discussion. Thus for me,

this book may be used with other literature as a pleasant teaching tool. However, while *Games Primates Play* has broad appeal to those from various academic fields, its "game theory" (i.e., economics) approach, rather than a strict play-behavior focus *per se*, means that many readers of *this* journal may find the book has limited appeal. For others, it will be a happy addition to our bookshelves.

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—Kerrie Lewis Graham, *Texas State University–San Marcos*

Vice City Virtue: Moral Issues in Digital Game Play

Karolien Poels and Steven Malliet, eds.
Belgium: Acco, 2011. Tables, notes, references. 351 pp. $54.96 paper. ISBN: 9789033484681

In June 2011, the United States Supreme Court struck down a 2005 California law banning the sale of some violent video games to minors on the grounds that there is no tradition of restricting children's access to depictions of violence in the U.S.A. That case is just one example from an ongoing debate about what scholars Karolien Poels and Steven Malliet, in their *Vice City Virtue,* call "moral issues in digital game play" (p. 21). Over the last three decades, scholars have investigated and debated the risks associated with, and the effects of playing, digital games. With this anthology, editors Poels and Malliet enter into the debate with hopes of moving it beyond a narrow focus on violent game effects, while providing the kind of nuanced view of morality that enables

scholars to better inform the public and policymakers.

The anthology sets out to accomplish these goals by offering different perspectives from psychologists, philosophers, theologians, political scientists, and communications and cultural-studies scholars working within the "philosophical," "media psychology," and "gamer theory" traditions (pp. 22–23). Anthologies like this one are often disjointed or difficult to navigate. The editors, however, have done an admirable job arranging the multidisciplinary group of essays into four complementary parts. The first part explores the philosophical study of morality in digital games in a section called "The Player as a (an) (a)Moral Agent" (p. 31). The second part, named "The Moral Psychology of Play" (p. 107), addresses such questions as how do players process virtual violence and why do players cheat in online multiplayer games. The third part, entitled "Moral Perceptions," surveys how the public, parents, and players perceive violent game content, while the fourth part includes case studies focusing on the moral content of such games as *Heavy Rain* (2010) and game genres as the World War II first-person shooter.

A chapter asserting that "media panics" differ from other kinds of "moral panics" also provides some necessary historical context to the essays. Media scholars Liesbet Depauw and Daniel Biltereyst do a commendable job providing a brief overview of the history of media panics, and the authors' assertion that current claims that young people are becoming more immoral, desensitized, or violent by playing digital games must be viewed within a history of media panic, is a good

one. Although it is beyond the scope of their essay, that history could have been explored in greater depth. In fact, if any voice seems to missing from this multidisciplinary anthology it is the voice of the historian.

Vice City Virtue echoes the recent work of psychologists such as Craig A. Anderson who finds a correlation between video game aggression and real-world violence and scholars such as Christopher J. Ferguson who criticize the methodology and conclusions of these studies. Yet *Vice City Virtue* is not squarely on one side or the other of the video game violence divide. Instead, the editors compiled an impressive and diverse range of essays that address the potential risks and opportunities associated with digital game play. For instance, philosopher Mark Coeckelbergh's essay suggests that those who play violent games could be training themselves to be less empathetic toward others, while game designer and scholar Jose P. Zagal's essay argues that an adventure game such as *Heavy Rain* encourages players to experiment with moral issues in a safe environment.

The idea that games are players' experiments follows the recent trend by many scholars who emphasize the player as an active agent in game play. Many of *Vice City Virtue*'s essays, whether explicitly or implicitly, articulate what Poels and Malliet call a "player-centered view" or the interaction between the player and the game. For example, in psychologist Garry Young and media scholar Monica Whitty's essay on symbolic taboo activities (murder, rape, pedophilia) in virtual environments, they introduce the concept of psychological parity and argue that the

most important question when studying STAs in virtual environments is whether a particular player is capable of transitioning from a virtual space to the real world.

Although some of the essays in Vice City Virtue are less lively and even a little clunky compared to others, essays like Young and Whitty's are well worth exploring. Recent concerns about the potential dangers of video games following the December 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut demonstrate how relevant and valuable studies such as *Vice City Virtue* are. Debates about media content are often framed in moral terms, and studies such as these help complicate putative commonsense notions that media violence causes real-world violence.

—Jeremy K. Saucier, *International Center for the History of Electronic Games at The Strong, Rochester, NY*

Playing at the World: A History of Simulating Wars, People, and Fantastic Adventures: From Chess to Role-Playing Games

Jon Peterson
San Diego: Unreason Press LLC, 2012. Introduction, contents, images. 698 pp. $34.95 paper. ISBN: 9780615642048

Jon Peterson's *Playing at the World* traces the history of the practices, ideas, and cultural forces that led to Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson's invention of the role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons (D&D). As the subtitle implies, the book has a broad scope, but it also includes astonishing lev-

els of details about the evolution of the role-playing game.

Peterson begins the book with a look at the first edition of D&D. He notes that the game's lengthy subtitle, "Rules for Fantastic Medieval Wargames Campaigns Playable with Paper and Pencil and Miniature Figures," hints at the origins of the game. *Playing at the World* is first and foremost a history, and as a work of history that explores these origins, it impresses the reader with its breadth and depth.

The book has five chapters and an epilogue. Chapter 1 briefly surveys the history of American war gaming, covering the twenty years from Avalon Hill's pioneering war game *Tactics* (1954) to the release of Dungeons and Dragons (1974). This chapter is the most accessible in the book; it has a clear narrative that covers the key historical events in the development of D&D. The next three chapters each explore in great detail a theme important to understanding the history of role-playing games. Chapter 2 traces the history of the medieval fantasy genre (such as the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Robert Howard) and its rise to popularity in the middle of the twentieth century. Chapter 3 tells the history of war games, from the countless chess variants that led to Prussian *kriegspiel* in the early nineteenth century to the emergence of modern war games in the midtwentieth century. Chapter 4 examines the history of enacting fictional roles and characters. These three chapters provide copious details and testify to the author's years of dedicated research. Chapter 5 resumes the more narrative approach of chapter 1 and describes audiences' reactions to Dungeons & Dragons. The epilogue discusses